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USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
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CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - RUSSIA AND BURMA

1. LEAD STORIES: Friday morning's Yomiuri gave top play to the finding that the GOJ has asked the ROK Lee administration for help in arranging a meeting in South Korea between the parents of Japanese abductee Megumi Yokota and Megumi's daughter, who is in North Korea.

2. "Medvedev Needs to Be Independent" On the official start of the 'two-headed' government in Russia, the liberal Asahi editorialized (5/9): "Confusion (in Russian politics) is unavoidable, as the division of roles between Medvedev and Putin is still uncertain.... Russia is facing rising inflation and a widening gap between rich and poor. There could be a power struggle over who will take responsibility if discontent rises among the people. Russia's ties with the West have cooled, while its relations with Georgia and Ukraine continue to be strained. Medvedev and Putin cannot conduct diplomacy separately. The new president must move swiftly to assert his independence."

3. "Perilous Launch of Two-Headed Russia" The business-oriented Nikkei argued in an editorial (5/9): "If President Medvedev attempts to implement the rule of law, a confrontation with special interest groups will be unavoidable. Medvedev has stressed the continuation of Putin's policies. However, the two-headed government itself poses risks."

4. "Can Russia Move Toward Openness?" The liberal Mainichi asserted (5/9): "Improving relations with the U.S. is imperative for Russia. The new government with Medvedev at the helm needs to change Russia's image abroad and to launch a diplomatic line conciliatory to the West and Japan. Such steps would be a key factor in

ensuring global stability."

¶5. "Why Not Accept Humanitarian Assistance?" The top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri wrote (5/9): "The Burmese junta plans to carry out a national referendum on a constitutional draft on Saturday as scheduled, with the exception of some devastated areas. Democratic forces are strongly opposing the draft, given that it is meant to prolong the junta's rule by stipulating that 25 percent of seats in both chambers of the legislature be given to military officials. Is there any need to hold a referendum given the current situation?"

¶6. "Junta Neglecting to Protect People" The liberal Tokyo Shimbun contended (5/9): "It cannot be denied that the tragedy (associated with the cyclone) is a manmade disaster spawned by negligence on the part of the junta. Citizens were not given appropriate warnings or evacuation orders. It is not an exaggeration to say that the episode clearly illustrates the character of a junta that has long ruled its country while ignoring the people.... The junta is poised to go ahead with a planned referendum on a constitutional draft that is meant to preserve its power. Responsibility for protecting people's lives rests with the government. It must first find a way to weather the current crisis by cooperating with a broad range of citizens."

DONOVAN